

I. Response to Restriction Requirement and Election of Claims.

In response to paragraphs 1 and 6 of the Office Action, the Applicant elects the Group I claims, 1-21, which are indicated to be allowed over the prior art (see paragraph 15 of the Office Action). Claims 22-26 are being canceled in this amendment, without prejudice to prosecute such claims by divisional application. A new claim listing is attached as pages 5-9 of this communication.

II. Submission of new drawing pursuant to 37 C.F.R. § 1.82(e).

In response to paragraph 7 of the Office Action, a new drawing designated Figure 10, on a separate single sheet, is herein submitted and attached at the end of this communication.

Figure 10 shows the following features which have been identified by the Examiner as being recited in the claims: rifle barrel (11), receiver (13), gas return tube (17) and front sight/gas return tube assembly (15). Also shown is the delta ring (17). These elements are referenced in the specification and are well known elements of the M-16 rifle. No new matter has been entered.

III. Amendment to the Specification

In the Brief Description of the Drawings section; **ADD** a paragraph, after paragraph 0020 as follows

[0020.1] Figure 10 is a side elevation view of a barrel section of a rifle incorporating a handguard according to the invention, with a portion of the handguard cut away to reveal the barrel and the gas return tube.

In the Description of the Preferred Embodiments section;

REPLACE paragraph 24 with the following replacement paragraph:

[0024] Figures 5 and 6 show the exterior front and side of the half-grip piece 14

with the covers 18, 20 removed. The back of the piece 14 (Figure 4) looks the same with the covers engaged and removed. The half-grip piece 14 has an elongated body with a generally triangular lateral cross-section having two shorter exterior sides 30, 32 and a longer mating side 34, the exterior sides 30, 32 of the triangular cross-section being formed substantially at a right angle to each other, the longer side 34 of the triangular cross-section being centrally hollowed and having outer edges 36, 38 that form a mating surface for mating with the other half-grip piece. When the two half-grip pieces are mated, they form the forearm handguard 10, which encloses an air space surrounding a portion of the rifle barrel 11 between the receiver 13 and the front-sight/gas return tube assembly 15, as shown in Figure 10.

REPLACE paragraph 34 with the following replacement paragraph:

[0034] The apparatus 66 defines a semicircular opening 68 for wrapping around

the barrel 11 of the firearm. Extending from the semicircular portion of the opening is a slot 70, which interrupts half-ring 66A, for receiving the gas return tube 17 of the firearm. Such gas return tubes are conventional on rifles of the AR15/M16 family, and are shown, for example, in U.S. Pat. No. 4,663,875. The gas return tube 17 is located above the barrel 11 in the vertical plane of the rifle. The slot 70 projects from the semicircular opening at a substantially right angle to the exterior side 30. Thus, it is intended that when the handguard 10 is assembled, the slot 70 will engage the gas return tube 17 and the exterior side 30 will become the top of the handguard 10. Note that the mating surfaces 16 form substantially a 45 degree angle off the vertical plane of the firearm when the handguard 10 is properly mounted.

REPLACE paragraph 36 with the following replacement paragraph:

[0036] Similar to the front end of the half-grip piece, a semicircular mounting ring 72 extends from the rear end of the half-grip, as shown in Figure 4. This is a conventional extension to engage against the rifle's Delta ring 19, as shown in Fig. 10 (~~not depicted~~), except that the ring 72 has a center slot 74 for the rifle's gas return tube 17. Like the slot 70, the slot 74 is oriented transversely to the exterior surface 30.

IV. Amendments to the Claims

Cancel Claims 22-26.

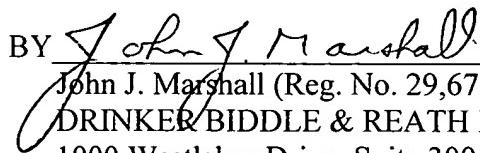
Remarks

The above election of claims, new drawing and amendments to the specification are believed to be fully responsive to the Office Action and place the application in condition for the allowed claims 1-21 to issue. Consideration of this response and noticed of allowance is requested.

In addition, a claim for priority was made in paragraph 1 of the application. The Applicant is submitting the priority documents under separate cover sheet.

Respectfully submitted,

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